

OF THE DIFFERENCE  
BETWEEN A GENIUS AND  
AN APOSTLE

1847



## OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GENIUS AND AN APOSTLE

What, exactly, have the errors<sup>1</sup> of exegesis and philosophy done in order to confuse Christianity, and how have they confused Christianity? Quite briefly and categorically, they have simply forced back the sphere of paradox-religion<sup>2</sup> into the sphere of aesthetics, and in consequence have succeeded in bringing Christian terminology to such a pass that terms which, so long as they remain within their sphere, are qualitative categories, can be put to almost any use as clever expressions. If the sphere of paradox-religion is abolished, or explained away in aesthetics, an Apostle becomes neither more nor less than a genius, and then—good night, Christianity! *Esprit* and the Spirit, revelation and originality, a call from God and genius, all end by meaning more or less the same thing.

That is how the errors of science<sup>3</sup> and learning have confused Christianity. The confusion has spread from learning to the religious discourse, with the result that one not infrequently hears priests, *bona fide*, in all learned simplicity, prostituting Christianity. They talk in exalted terms of St. Paul's brilliance and profundity, of his beautiful similes and so on—that is mere aestheticism. If St. Paul is to be regarded as a genius, then things look

<sup>1</sup> The errors, moreover, are not confined to heterodoxy but are also found in hyper-orthodoxy. They are in fact those of thoughtlessness.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> S. K. does not mean the natural sciences. The word used is the same as the German *Wissenschaft*, which means science as a method. Occasionally I have used learning.



### *Of the difference between*

black for him, and only clerical ignorance would ever dream of praising him in terms of aesthetics, because it has no standard, but argues that all is well so long as one says something good about him. This kind of good-natured and well-intentioned thoughtlessness is due to the fact that the individual in question is not disciplined by qualitative dialectic. If he were he would have learnt that to say something good of an Apostle, when it is inapposite, does him no service, for as a result he is acclaimed for what in this case is a matter of indifference, and admired as something which essentially he is not, and then what he is is quite forgotten. This kind of thoughtless eloquence is quite as likely to celebrate St. Paul as a stylist and an artist in words or, better still, since it is after all well known that he was also engaged in a craft, as a tent-maker whose masterly work surpassed that of all upholsterers before and since—for as long as one says something good about St. Paul all is well. As a genius St. Paul cannot be compared with either Plato or Shakespeare, as a coiner of beautiful similes he comes pretty low down in the scale, as a stylist his name is quite obscure—and as an upholsterer: well, I frankly admit I have no idea how to place him. The point is that it is always better to treat stupid solemnity as a joke and then the really serious thing becomes apparent, the fact that St. Paul is an Apostle. As an Apostle St. Paul has no connexion whatsoever with Plato or Shakespeare, with stylists or upholsterers, and none of them (Plato no more than Shakespeare or Harrison the upholsterer) can possibly be compared with him.

A genius and an Apostle are qualitatively different, they are definitions which each belong in their own



## *a Genius and an Apostle*

spheres: *the sphere of immanence, and the sphere of transcendence:*

(1) *Genius may, therefore, have something new to bring forth, but what it brings forth disappears again as it becomes assimilated by the human race, just as the difference 'genius' disappears as soon as one thinks of eternity; the Apostle has, paradoxically, something new to bring, the newness of which, precisely because it is essentially paradoxical, and not an anticipation in relation to the development of the race, always remains, just as an Apostle remains an Apostle in all eternity, and no eternal immanence puts him on the same level as other men, because he is essentially, paradoxically different.* (2) *Genius is what it is of itself, i.e. through that which it is in itself; an Apostle is what he is by his divine authority.* (3) *Genius has only an immanent teleology; the Apostle is placed as absolute paradoxical teleology.*

All thought breathes in immanence, whereas faith and the paradox are a qualitative sphere unto themselves. As between man and man, *qua* man, all differences are immanent, vanishing before essential and eternal thought, a factor which is certainly valid for the moment, but disappears in the essential equality of eternity. Genius is, as the word itself shows, immediateness (*ingenium*, that which is inborn, primitive, *primus*, original, *origo*, &c.),<sup>1</sup> it is a natural qualification, *genius is born*. Even long before there can be any question as to how far genius is prepared to relate its particular gifts to God, it is genius, and it

<sup>1</sup> *Genius* comes from the Latin *genius*, guardian spirit; but the word derives from the stem of the verb *gigno*, to give birth, and seems originally to have meant inherited power personified. Related to *genius* and *gigno* is *ingenium*, gift (from *in-gigno*, that is to say 'in-born'). S. K. is therefore right etymologically, though he did not know the root meaning of *genius*. (Note in the Danish edition S.V. XI, edited by A. B. Drachmann.)



## *Of the difference between*

remains genius even if it does not do so. It is possible that genius may so change that it develops into what it is *κᾶτα δύναμιν*, so as to acquire conscious possession of itself. If one uses the expression 'paradox' in order to denote the something new which a genius may have to bring forth, it is only used in an inessential sense of the transitory paradox of the anticipation thus condensed into a paradox which, however, disappears again later. In his first communication a genius may be paradoxical, but the more he comes to himself, the more completely will the paradox disappear. A genius may be a century ahead of his time, and therefore appear to be a paradox, but ultimately the race will assimilate what was once a paradox in such a way that it is no longer paradoxical.

It is otherwise with an Apostle. The word itself indicates the difference. An Apostle is not born; an Apostle is a man called and appointed by God, receiving a mission from him. An Apostle does not develop in such a way that he successively becomes what he is *κᾶτα δύναμιν*. For to become an Apostle is not preceded by any potential possibility; essentially every man is equally near to becoming one. An Apostle can never come to himself in such a way that he becomes conscious of his apostolic calling as a factor in the development of his life. Apostolic calling is a paradoxical factor, which from first to last in his life stands paradoxically outside his personal identity with himself as the definite person he is. A man may perhaps have reached years of discretion long ago, when suddenly he is called to be an Apostle. As a result of this call he does not become more intelligent, does not receive more imagination, a greater acuteness of mind and so on; on the contrary, he remains himself and by that



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

paradoxical fact he is sent on a particular mission by God. By this paradoxical fact the Apostle is made paradoxically different from all other men for all eternity. The new which he may have to bring forth is the essential paradox. However long it may be proclaimed in the world it remains essentially and equally new, equally paradoxical, and no immanence can assimilate it. The Apostle did not behave like the man marked out by natural gifts who is born before his time; he was perhaps what we call a simple man, but by a paradoxical fact he was called to proclaim this new thing. Even if thought were to think that it could assimilate the doctrine, it cannot assimilate the way in which the doctrine came into the world; for the essential paradox is the protest against immanence. But the way in which a doctrine of this kind came into the world is qualitatively decisive, and it can only be ignored by deceit or by thoughtlessness.

(2) Genius is appreciated purely aesthetically, according to the measure of its content, and its specific weight; an Apostle is what he is through having divine authority. *Divine authority is, qualitatively, the decisive factor.* It is not by evaluating the content of the doctrine aesthetically or intellectually that I should or could reach the result: *ergo*, the man who proclaimed the doctrine was called by a revelation; *ergo*, he is an Apostle. The very reverse is the case: the man who is called by a revelation and to whom a doctrine is entrusted, argues from the fact that it is a revelation, from his authority. I have not got to listen to St. Paul because he is clever, or even brilliantly clever; I am to bow before St. Paul because he has divine authority; and in any case it remains St. Paul's responsibility to see that he produces that impression,



## *Of the difference between*

whether anybody bows before his authority or not. St. Paul must not appeal to his cleverness, for in that case he is a fool; he must not enter into a purely aesthetic or philosophical discussion of the content of the doctrine, for in that case he is side-tracked. No, he must appeal to his divine authority and, while willing to lay down his life and everything, by that very means *prevent* any aesthetic impertinence and any direct philosophic approach to the form and content of the doctrine. St. Paul has not to recommend himself and his doctrine with the help of beautiful similes; on the contrary, he should say to the individual: 'Whether the comparison is beautiful or whether it is worn and threadbare is all one, you must realize that what I say was entrusted to me by a revelation, so that it is God Himself or the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks, and you must not presumptuously set about criticizing the form. I cannot and dare not compel you to obey, but through your relation to God in your conscience I make you eternally responsible to God, eternally responsible for your relation to this doctrine, by having proclaimed it as revealed to me, and consequently proclaimed it with divine authority.'

*Authority* is the decisive quality. Or is there perhaps no difference, even within the relativity of human existence, and even though it disappears in immanence, between the king's command and the word of a poet or a thinker? And what is that difference if not that the king's command has authority and prohibits all aesthetic and critical impertinence as to the form and the content? But neither the poet nor the thinker has authority, even within his own sphere of relativity; their statements are judged on purely aesthetic and philosophic grounds according to



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

the value of the form and the content. The cause of the fundamental confusion in Christianity is surely that as a result of scepticism people are uncertain whether there is a God, and furthermore, that rebelling against all authorities they forget the meaning and dialectic of authority. A king is present physically and one can physically assure oneself of the fact, and should it become necessary he can give one decided physical proof that he is there. But God is not present in that sense. Scepticism has used this fact in order to put God on the same level as all those who have no authority, on the same level as genius, poets and the thinkers, whose sayings are judged from a purely aesthetic or philosophic point of view; and then, if the thing is well said, the man is a genius—and if it is unusually well said, then God said it!

In that way God is spirited away. What is he to do? If God stops a man on the road, and calls him with a revelation and sends him armed with divine authority among men, they say to him; from whom dost thou come? He answers: from God. But now God cannot help his messenger physically like a king, who gives him soldiers or policemen, or his ring or his signature, which is known to all; in short, God cannot help men by providing them with physical certainty that an Apostle is an Apostle—which would, moreover, be nonsense. Even miracles, if the Apostle has that gift, give no physical certainty; for the miracle is the object of faith. Moreover, it is nonsense to require *physical* certainty that an Apostle is an Apostle (the paradoxical qualification of a spiritual relationship), just as it is nonsense to require a *physical* certainty that God exists, since God is *spirit*. The Apostle, then, says he comes from God. The others



## *Of the difference between*

answer: Very well, then, let us see whether the content of your teaching is divine, in which case we will accept it, along with the fact that it was revealed to you. In that way both God and the Apostle are fooled. The divine authority of the one called should in fact be the sure protection which safeguards the teaching, and preserves it at the majestic distance of the divine from impertinent curiosity, instead of which the doctrine has to submit to being criticized and sniffed at—in order that people may discover whether it was a revelation or not; and probably in the meanwhile God and the Apostle have to wait at the gate, or in the porter's lodge, till the learned upstairs have settled the matter. The man who is called ought, according to divine ordinance, to use his divine authority in order to be rid of all the impertinent people who will not obey, but want to reason; and instead of that men have, at a single go, transformed the Apostle into an examinee who appears on the market with a new teaching.

What, then, is authority? Is it the profundity, the excellence, the cleverness of the doctrine? Not at all! If authority simply expressed in a higher potency, or reduplicated, the fact that the doctrine is profound, then there is no such thing as authority; for in that case if the learner were to assimilate this doctrine completely and entirely through the understanding, then there would cease to be any difference between the teacher and the learner. Authority is, on the contrary, something which remains unchanged, which one cannot acquire even by understanding the doctrine perfectly. *Authority is a specific quality which, coming from elsewhere, becomes qualitatively apparent when the content of the message or of the action is posited as indifferent.* Let us take an example, as



## *a Genius and an Apostle*

simple as possible, where the situation is nevertheless made clear. When a man with authority says to a man, go! and when a man who has not the authority says, go! the expression (go!) and its content are identical; aesthetically it is, if you like, equally well said, but the authority makes the difference. If authority is not 'the other' (τὸ ἕτερον),<sup>1</sup> if it is in any sense merely a higher potency within the identity, then there is no such thing as authority. If a teacher is enthusiastically conscious that he has expressed the doctrine which he is proclaiming at the sacrifice of all else, this consciousness may well give him determination, but it does not give him authority. His life as a proof of the rightness of the teaching is not 'the other' (τὸ ἕτερον); it is a simple reduplication. The fact that he lives according to the doctrine does not prove that it is right, but only that because he is convinced of the righteousness of his teaching he therefore lives according to it. On the other hand, whether a police official is a rascal or an upright man—as soon as he is on duty he has authority.

In order to throw more light on the concept authority, so important for the sphere of the paradox-religious, I will elaborate the dialectic of authority.

*Authority is inconceivable within the sphere of immanence, or else it can only be thought of as something transitory.* In so far as one may speak of authority in political, social, and

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it will occur to some readers, as it occurs to me, to recall in connexion with this examination of 'authority' the 'Edifying Discourses' of Magister Kierkegaard, where he stresses the fact so clearly, by repeating word for word on each occasion, that 'they are not sermons, because the author is without authority to preach'. Authority is a specific quality either of an Apostolic calling or of ordination. To preach simply means to use authority; and that is exactly what is completely and utterly forgotten in these times.



## *Of the difference between*

disciplinary connexions, or of using authority, authority is only a transitory factor, a passing thing which either vanishes later in time, or vanishes in so far as time and earthly life are transitory factors which disappear with all their differentiations. The only difference which can be *conceived* as the basis for the relations between man and man *qua* man is the difference within the identity of immanence, that is to say essential equality. The individual man cannot be *conceived* as differing from all other men by a specific quality (otherwise all thought would cease, as in fact it quite consistently does in the sphere of paradox-religion and of faith). All the human differences among men *qua* men vanish before thought as factors within the whole and within the quality of identity. For the moment it is my duty to respect and obey the difference, but religiously I may feel myself edified by the certainty that the differences disappear in eternity, those that single me out no less than those which weigh me down. As a subject it is my duty to honour and obey the king with undivided heart, but religiously I may feel strengthened by the thought that, essentially, I am a citizen of heaven and that should I ever meet the king after death I shall no longer be bound to him by the ties of obedience of a subject.

Such is the position as between man and man *qua* man. But between God and man there is an eternal, essential, qualitative difference which cannot, at the risk of presumption, be allowed to disappear in the blasphemous thought that, though certainly different in the transitory moment of time, so that man ought to obey and to pray God in this life, nevertheless the difference will, in



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

eternity, vanish in an essential identity, so that in eternity God and man, like king and servant, become equals.

Between God and man, then, there is and remains an eternal, essential, qualitative difference. *The paradox-religious relationship* (which, quite rightly, cannot be thought, but only believed) *appears when God appoints a particular man to divine authority*, in relation, be it carefully noted, to that which God has entrusted to him. The man thus called is no longer related as man to man *qua* man; his relationship to other men is not that of a qualitative difference (such as genius, exceptional gifts, position, &c.), he is related paradoxically by having a specific quality which no immanence can resolve in the equality of eternity; for it is essentially paradoxical and *after* thought (not before, anterior to thought), contrary to thought. If a man thus called has a doctrine to bring forth according to a divine command, and another man, let us suppose, of himself and by himself discovered the same thing: then in all eternity the two things would not become equal; for the first man is different from every other man by virtue of his paradoxically specific quality (divine authority), and different from the immanently essential equality which is at the basis of all other human differences. The qualification 'an Apostle' belongs in the transcendental sphere, the sphere of paradox-religion which, quite consistently, also has a qualitatively different expression for the relation of other men to an Apostle: namely, they are related to him in faith, whereas thought is and breathes and has its being in immanence. But faith is not a transitory qualification, any more than the Apostle's paradoxical qualification was transitory. Between man and man *qua* man, then, no *established* or



### *Of the difference between*

continuous authority was *conceivable*; it was something transitory. But for the sake of the essential consideration of authority, however, we may dwell for a moment upon a few examples of so-called, and in temporal conditions true, forms of authority. A king, it is assumed, has authority. Nevertheless, there is something disturbing in the idea of a king who is witty or an artist. The explanation of this is, surely, that one naturally lays the stress on his royal authority and so by comparison looks upon the more general human marks of distinction as something transitory, as something fortuitous, inessential and disturbing. A government department is regarded as having authority within its orbit. And yet it would be disturbing if its ordinances were really clever, witty, and profound. Here again the explanation is that, quite rightly, all the accent falls qualitatively on the authority. To ask whether a king is a genius—with the intention, if such were the case, of obeying him, is in reality *lèse-majesté*; for the question conceals a doubt as to whether one intends to submit to authority. To be prepared to obey a government department if it can be clever is really to make a fool of it. To honour one's father because he is intelligent is impiety.

However, as has already been said, between man and man *qua* man authority, when it exists, is something transitory, and eternity does away with all forms of worldly authority. But now, with regard to the transcendental sphere, let us take an example, as simple as possible and for that very reason as striking as can be. When Christ says, 'There is an eternal life'; and when a theological student says, 'There is an eternal life:' both say the same thing, and there is no more deduction,



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

development, profundity, or thoughtfulness in the first expression than in the second; both statements are, judged aesthetically, equally good. And yet there is an eternal qualitative difference between them! Christ, as God-Man, is in possession of the specific quality of authority which eternity can never mediate, just as in all eternity Christ can never be put on the same level as essential human equality. Christ taught, therefore, with authority. To ask whether Christ is profound is blasphemy, and is an attempt (whether conscious or not) to destroy Him surreptitiously; for the question conceals a doubt concerning His authority, and this attempt to weigh Him up is impertinent in its directness, behaving as though He were being examined, instead of which it is to Him that all power is given in heaven and upon earth.

Yet, nowadays, it is seldom, very seldom, that one hears or reads a religious discourse which is framed correctly. The better among them often dabble a little in what one might call unconscious or well-meant rebellion, by defending and upholding Christianity with all their strength—with the wrong categories. Let me take an example, the first that comes to hand. I prefer to choose a German because then I know that no one, not even the most stupid, not even the most wrong-headed, could imagine that I am writing about a matter which in my belief is infinitely important—in order to point to some clergyman or other. Bishop Sailer,<sup>1</sup> in a homily for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, preaches on the text John viii. 47-51. He chooses these two verses: 'He that is of God heareth God's word,' and 'If a man keep my

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Sailer, 1751-1832, Bishop of Regensburg, tutor of Ludwig I of Bavaria.



### *Of the difference between*

sayings, he shall never die,' and continues: 'in these words of the Lord three great mysteries are solved, mysteries over which men have racked their brains from the beginning of time'. There we have it. The word 'mystery', and particularly the 'three great mysteries', and then in the next phase, 'over which men have racked their *brains*', immediately leads one's thoughts on to the profound in an intellectual sense; pondering, searching, speculation. Yet how can a simple apodictic statement be profound, an apodictic statement which is only what it is because so and so has said it; a statement which is not to be understood or fathomed, but simply believed? How can any man imagine that a mystery is solved, in a learned speculative way, by a direct statement, by an assertion? The question is, after all: Is there an eternal life? The answer: There is an eternal life. What, in heaven's name, is profound about that? If Christ had not said it, and if Christ was not who He said He was, then if the statement itself is profound, it must be possible to discover its profundity. Let us take the example of Herr Petersen, the theological student, who also says, 'There is an eternal life.' Would it ever strike any one to tax him with profundity on account of a direct statement? The decisive thing is not the statement, but the fact that it was Christ who said it; but the confusing thing is that, as though in order to tempt people to believe, they talk about profundity. In order to speak correctly a Christian priest would have to say, quite simply: We have Christ's word for it that there is an eternal life; and that settles the matter. There is no question here of racking one's brains or philosophizing, but simply that Christ said it, not as a profound thinker but with divine



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

authority. Let us go further, let us suppose that a man believes in eternal life on Christ's word. In that case he believes without any fuss about being profound and searching and philosophical and 'racking his brains'. On the other hand, take the case of a man who racks his brains and ruminates profoundly on the question of immortality: would he not be justified in denying that this direct statement is a profound answer to the question? What Plato says on immortality really is profound, reached after deep study; but then poor Plato has no authority whatsoever.

In the meanwhile, the thing is this. Doubt and superstition, which make of faith a vain thing, have among other things also made men shy of obedience, of bowing before authority. This rebelliousness worms its way even into the thought of better people, perhaps unbeknown to them, and so begins all the extravagance, which at bottom is only treachery, about the profundity and the beauty which one can but faintly perceive. And so if one had to describe the Christian-religious discourse as it is now heard with a single definite predicate, one would have to say it was *affected*. Normally in referring to a priest's affectation, one means the way he dresses, or gets himself up, or that he talks in a sugary voice, or that he rolls his Rs like a foreigner, wrinkles his brow, or uses violent gestures and ridiculous poses. All this, however, is of less importance, though it is desirable that he should not do so. But the pernicious thing is when the whole train of his thought is affected, when the price of its orthodoxy is an emphasis in an entirely wrong place, when he calls for faith in Christ, when he preaches faith in Him on grounds which simply cannot be the object of faith. If a son were



## Of the difference between

to say, 'I obey my father, not because he is my father but because he is a genius, or because his orders are always profoundly intelligent,' then that filial obedience is affected. The son accentuates something entirely wrong, he emphasizes the intellectual aspect, the profundity in a *command*, whereas a command is, of course, indifferent to that qualification. The son wishes to obey by virtue of the father's intellectual profundity; and to *obey* by virtue thereof is just what is not possible, for his critical attitude as to whether the command is profound undermines the obedience. And so, too, it is affectation to speak of adopting Christianity and believing Christ because of the great profundity of the doctrine. By putting the accent in entirely the wrong place one only makes a show of orthodoxy. The whole of modern philosophy<sup>1</sup> is therefore affected, because it has done away with *obedience* on the one hand, and *authority* on the other, and then, in spite of everything, claims to be orthodox. A priest who is quite correct in his discourse would, when quoting the words of Christ, have to speak in this way: 'These words were spoken by Him to whom, according to His own statement, is given all power in heaven and on earth. You who hear me must consider within yourselves whether you will bow before his authority or not, accept and believe the words or not. But if you do not wish to do so, then for heaven's sake do not go and accept the words because they are clever or profound or wonderfully beautiful, for that is a mockery of God.' For, once the command of authority, of the specific paradox-authority, is posited, then all relationships are qualitatively changed, then the kind of accept-

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary—i.e. Hegel.



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

ance which was previously allowable and desirable becomes a crime and presumptuous.

But now how can an Apostle prove that he has authority? If he could prove it *physically*, then he would not be an Apostle. He has no other proof than his own statement. That has to be so; for otherwise the believer's relationship to him would be direct instead of being paradoxical. In the transitory conditions of authority between man and man *qua* man, authority will normally be physically recognizable by power. An Apostle has no other proof than his own statement, and at the most his willingness to suffer anything for the sake of that statement. His words in this respect will be short: 'I am called by God; do with me what you will, scourge me, persecute me, but my last words are my first: I am called by God, and I make you eternally responsible for what you do against me.' Let us suppose that an Apostle were really to have power in the worldly sense, had great influence and powerful connexions, the forces with which one is victorious over men's opinions and judgements—then if he used them he would *eo ipso* have lost his cause. By using power he would have defined his efforts as essentially identical with those of other men, and yet an Apostle is only what he is through his paradoxical heterogeneity, through having divine authority, which he can possess absolutely and unchanged even if he is looked upon by men, as St. Paul says, as less than the filth they walk upon.

(3) *Genius has only an immanent teleology; the Apostle is absolutely, paradoxically, teleologically placed.*

If a man can be said to be situated absolutely teleologically, then he is an Apostle. The doctrine com-



## *Of the difference between*

municated to him is not a task which he is given to ponder over, it is not given him for his own sake, he is, on the contrary, on a mission and has to proclaim the doctrine and use authority. Just as a man, sent into the town with a letter, has nothing to do with its contents, but has only to deliver it; just as a minister who is sent to a foreign court is not responsible for the content of the message, but has only to convey it correctly: so, too, an Apostle has really only to be faithful in his service, and to carry out his task. Therein lies the essence of an Apostle's life of self-sacrifice, even if he were never persecuted, in the fact that he is 'poor, yet making many rich', that he never dares take the time or the quiet or carefreeness in order to grow rich. Intellectually speaking he is like a tireless housewife who herself hardly has time to eat, so busy is she preparing food for others. And even though at first he might have hoped for a long life, his life to the very end will remain unchanged, for there will always be new people to whom to proclaim the doctrine. Although a revelation is a paradoxical factor which surpasses man's understanding, one can nevertheless understand this much, which has, moreover, proved to be the case everywhere: that a man is called by a revelation to go out in the world, to proclaim the Word, to act and to suffer, to a life of uninterrupted activity as the Lord's messenger. But that a man should be called by a revelation to sit back and enjoy his possessions undisturbed, in active literary *far niente*, momentarily clever, and afterwards as publisher and editor of the uncertainties of his cleverness: that is something approaching blasphemy.<sup>1</sup>

It is otherwise with genius; it has only an immanent

<sup>1</sup> A reference to Mag. Adler.



### *a Genius and an Apostle*

teleology, it develops itself, and while developing itself this self-development projects itself as its work. It thus receives importance, perhaps even great importance, but it is not teleologically situated in regard to the world and to others. Genius lives in itself; and, humorously, might live withdrawn and self-satisfied, without for that reason taking its gifts in vain, so long as it develops itself earnestly and industriously, following its own genius, regardless of whether others profit by it or not. Genius is therefore in no sense inactive, and works within itself perhaps harder than a dozen business men put together, but none of its achievements have any exterior *telos*. That is at once the humanity and the pride of genius: the humanity lies in the fact that it does not define itself teleologically in relation to any other man, as though there were any one who needed it; its pride lies in the fact that it immanently relates itself to itself. It is modest of the nightingale not to require any one to listen to it; but it is also proud of the nightingale not to care whether any one listens to it or not. The dialectic of genius will give particular offence in our times, where the masses, the many, the public, and other such abstractions contrive to turn everything topsy-turvy. The honoured public, the domineering masses, wish genius to express that it exists for their sake; they only see one side of the dialectic of genius, take offence at its pride and do not perceive that the same thing is also modesty and humility. The honoured public and the domineering masses would therefore also take the existence of an Apostle in vain. For it is certainly true that he exists absolutely for the sake of others, is sent out for the sake of others; but it is not the masses and not mankind and not the public, not



*Of the difference between a Genius and an Apostle*

even the highly educated public, which is his lord and master—but God; and the Apostle is one who has divine authority to command both the masses and the public.

The humorous self-sufficiency of genius is the unity of a modest resignation in the world and a proud elevation above the world: of being an unnecessary superfluity and a precious ornament. If the genius is an artist, then he accomplishes his work of art, but neither he nor his work of art has a *telos* outside him. Or he is an author, who abolishes every teleological relation to his environment and humorously defines himself as a poet. Lyrical art has certainly no *telos* outside it: and whether a man writes a short lyric or folios, it makes no difference to the quality of the nature of his work. The lyrical author is only concerned with his production, enjoys the pleasure of producing, often perhaps only after pain and effort; but he has nothing to do with others, he does not write *in order that*: in order to enlighten men or in order to help them along the right road, in order to bring about something; in short, he does not write *in order that*. The same is true of every genius. No genius has an *in order that*; the Apostle has absolutely and paradoxically, an *in order that*.